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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: PRESIDENT CHEN'S PLAN TO ABOLISH
THE NATIONAL UNIFICATION COUNCIL AND GUIDELINES

1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies continued to provide extensive reporting February 25-27 on Chen's plan to abolish the National Unification Council (NUC) and National Unification Guidelines (NUG), but coverage also focused on a controversy over the new electronic toll collection system for Taiwan's freeways, the February 28 Incident of 1947, and the Philippine military camp standoff. The pro-independence "Liberty Times," Taiwan's biggest daily, ran a banner headline on its front page February 27 that read: "[Taiwan] Has Obtained Washington's Understanding and Will Announce [the Decision to] Abolish the NUC and NUG Today." The newspaper also carried a news story on its page two February 25 with the headline: "The National Security Council Submitted Its Assessment Report on the Abolition of the NUC and NUG [to Chen] Last Friday. Chen Will Not Reiterate the Four No's Pledge When Announcing [His Decision to] Abolish the NUC and NUG." The pro-independence "Taiwan Daily" carried a letter supporting Chen's plan to abolish the NU written by Taiwan's "Hand-in-Hand Alliance" to U.S. President George W. Bush via AIT Taipei on its front page February 26. The pro-unification "United Daily News" ran a front-page story February 27 with the headline: "[Taiwan] Will Avoid Using [the Word] 'Abolish;' NUC Will Cease to Apply." The sub-headline added: "Bian to Host High-Level National Security Meeting Today to Decide on the Matter. [Chen] Will Not Reiterate the 'Four No's' Pledge And Has No Intention of Changing the Status Quo Across the Taiwan Strait. The United States Will Openly Say It 'Understands'." The pro-status quo "China Times," on the other hand, ran a banner headline on its front page February 27 that said: "Washington and Taipei Negotiating On the Wording: to 'Abolish,' 'Freeze' Or 'Suspend' [the NUC and NUG]. Bian Will Make a Final Decision Regarding the Abolition of the NUC and NUG." The newspaper also ran an article on an interview between Taiwan's CTI TV and an unnamed senior U.S. official on its page three February 27; the U.S. official was quoted as saying that the "Taiwan Relations Act is not a blank check with which Taiwan can make any kind of repeated demands it wants," and that even though the United States takes its commitment seriously, it is "not an open-ended commitment to any particular government on Taiwan to completely ignore America's interests."

2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a "Liberty Times" editorial said "What matters today is not whether Taiwan 'abolishes the NUC and NUG' or the 'Four No's' pledge but whether China will 'renounce the use of force' against, and its 'intention' to annex, Taiwan." Washington

correspondent Nadia Tsao also said in the "Liberty Times" that since Chen is determined to abolish the NUC and NUG, what Taiwan needs to do now is damage control. An editorial in the limited-circulated, pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" argued that scraping the NUC can defend Taiwan's interests and the status quo. Journalist Sean Liu analyzed Chen's attitude in abolishing the NUC in the "United Daily News; according to Liu, "Chen seems to want to use the 'abolition of the NUC and NUG' to further nail down his 'one country on each side of the [Taiwan] Strait' doctrine. In addition to warning Beijing not to just contact Taiwan's opposition parties and forcing the KMT to state clearly its stance on cross-Straits relations, Chen also hopes that the international community, including the United States, will not use 'one China' to define the status quo across the Taiwan Strait any more." A separate "United Daily News" editorial strongly questioned the DPP for supporting Chen's move to abolish the NUC and NUG and asked if the DPP has abandoned its 'middle way' approach. End summary.

A) "The Key Lies in the Fact that China Must 'Renounce the Use of Force' against, and 'Unification' with, Taiwan"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 600,000] asserted in an editorial (2/27):

". The cause and result of the so-called 'Five No's' pledge are in fact very clear; namely, the sentence that 'as long as Beijing has no intention to use force against Taiwan' is a necessary prerequisite. Without this prerequisite, the inference - the 'Four No's' - naturally will not exist. Beijing has never renounced [its intention] to use force against Taiwan since 2000; furthermore, it is increasing its military threat against the island. The United States' repeated warnings that military strength across the Taiwan Strait will become imbalanced and its call for Taiwan to pass the [U.S.] arms procurement bill as early as possible

are all the best evidence. . In other words, the foundation of the 'Five No's' pledge was long ago destroyed by China itself. .

"The so-called '[move to] abolish the NUC and NUG' is nothing but a move to fulfill democracy. Moreover, Taiwan's status quo shows that it is already an independent and democratic sovereign state. The so-called 'changing of the status quo' should thus refer to 'the pursuit of unification [with China].' Both the NUC and NUG pursue [the goal of] unification; they are thus in themselves an attempt to alter the status quo. .

"Those who support ultimate unification [with China] called the 'Five No's' pledge the greatest common denominator between Washington, Beijing and Taipei. But in reality, the common interests of the three sides do not lie in the 'Five No's' pledge but in the statement that 'China has no intention to use force against Taiwan.' It will be good and welcome news for regional stability and for the Chinese people as well if China thoroughly renounces the use of force against Taiwan and its military expansionism. As a result, what matters today is not whether Taiwan 'abolishes the NUC and NUG' or the 'Four No's' pledge but whether China would 'renounce the use of force' against, and 'unification' with (i.e. renounce [its intention] to annex), Taiwan."

B) "United States Hopes That Bian Could Do Damage Control with Regard to the Impact Caused by His Abolition of the NUC and NUG"

Washington correspondent Nadia Tsao said in the "Washington Observation" column in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 600,000] wrote (2/26):

"Officials of the Bush administration [indeed] have doubts about Chen Shui-bian's credibility. But it would be too absurd [to believe] the rumors that Washington will review the Taiwan Relations Act or withdraw [its commitment to]

provide military protection to Taiwan. First, even if Taiwan abolishes the NUC and NUG, Washington is clearly aware how far the Chen Shui-bian administration, under the restraint of Washington and Taiwan's opposition parties, can move along on the road to Taiwan independence. Second, the fact that the United States has continued arms sales, and has developed strong non-official ties, with Taiwan after it established diplomatic relations with Beijing shows that Washington has its own profound strategic considerations. In the face of China's growing strength without a clear intention, Washington needs Taiwan, a democratic ally, to restrain Beijing. It will do Washington more harm and no good if it 'penalizes' Taiwan and jeopardizes the foundation of Washington-Taipei ties. To tell the truth, it will really be a nightmare for Washington if Taiwan announces today that it is interested in unifying with China.

"Nonetheless, even those Americans who are close to Taiwan believe that the abolition of the NUC and NUG does not come without exacting a price [with regard] to Washington-Taipei ties. What Taiwan needs to do now is damage control; perhaps Taiwan can at least reduce the impact [of the abolition of the NUC and NUG] to a minimum if it could let [U.S. President George W.] Bush and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice hear Taiwan's voices via certain channels."

C) "Dumping NUC Defends Taiwan's Interests"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" [circulation: 20,000] editorialized (2/27):

"Since all indications are that President Chen Shui-bian is resolved to abolish the anachronistic NUC and its NUG, it is time for the president and the Democratic Progressive Party to fully prepare a possible backlash from Taiwan's domestic opposition and also from some portions of the international community. . We fully support President Chen's decisive move, but also strongly urge him and the DPP government to incorporate effective skills of persuasion and public explanation to generate domestic support and international understanding. .

"We urge the Bush administration to continue unprejudiced bilateral communications and take account of the fact that the abolition of the NUC and NUG aims to safeguard against, not promote, 'unilateral changes' in the cross-strait status. . By habitually unilaterally blaming Taiwan for 'making trouble' across the Taiwan Strait, the international

community has inflicted a grave injustice to the Taiwan people who have adhered to democratic values of peace, freedom and self-determination and instated has encouraged Beijing to continue its military intimidation and political squeezing against Taiwan.

"In response, the DPP government must utilize its resources to launch proactive and extensive campaigns to explain President Chen's decision to the world community. Such efforts should stress that the source of 'trouble' lies in Beijing's military deployments against Taiwan and its anti-secession law and that the abolishment of the NUC and NUG has nothing to do with 'provoking' the PRC but much to do with safeguarding Taiwan's democracy. The next couple of months will be a critical time for Taiwan to appeal to the international community to respect our right to defend our own national interests through guaranteeing the democratic principle of self-determination and by ensuring peace based on democracy and equality in the Taiwan Strait."

D) "Why Is Bian so Tough This Time?"

Journalist Sean Liu commented in a news analysis in the pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] (2/27):

"The hidden wrestling between Washington, Beijing, and Taipei over [President Chen's plan to] 'abolish the NUC and NUG' over the past month has finally come to the moment of

showdown. . Judged by the remarks of Chen and other relevant officials, Chen seems to want to use the 'abolition of the NUC and NUG' to further nail down his 'one country on each side of the [Taiwan] Strait' doctrine. In addition to warning Beijing not to just contact Taiwan's opposition parties and forcing the KMT to state clearly its stance on cross-Strait relations, Chen also hopes that the international community, including the United States, not to use 'one China' to define the status quo across the Taiwan Strait any more. .

"In the face of Washington's grave concerns, the Presidential Office seemed to want to express, via certain appropriate ways, that it has no intention to change the status quo, in an attempt to release Washington's backlashes. Perhaps following constant communications [between Taipei and Washington], the United States' backlashes will not be as strong as the opposition parties imagine them to be. Naturally, the United States will not give up helping to defend Taiwan just for [Chen's] move, but it definitely has the power to let Taiwan feel Washington's displeasure by using some matters that Taiwan cares but which will not jeopardize the balance across the Taiwan Strait. .

"Chen is about to announce his move to abolish the NUC and NUG. People can soon tell whether Taiwan can break through the attacks from both the United States and China. Even though Beijing may over-react like it used to and Taiwan can thus win the international community's sympathy, the Presidential Office must not always count on its enemy's mistakes to decide on its major policies."

E) "Has the DPP Thoroughly Abandoned Its Middle-of-the-Road Route?"

The pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] editorialized (2/26):

". [Chen] has been flip-flapping between his plan to 'rectify Taiwan's name and write a new constitution' and his statement that it is a move 'that deceives himself and others as well;' and between his plan to 'abolish the NUC and NUG' and his [assurance] that [such a move] will not 'alter the status quo.' [Chen] has no 'faith' and no 'policy' but only 'schemes and power' in mind. Now Chen has kept the DPP on a short leash via [DPP Chairman] Yu Shyi-kun, and again held Taiwan as a hostage via the DPP. He put the Taiwan independence topic on the table regardless of any consequences just to resolve his personal leadership crisis; in the meantime, he has pushed the DPP's route to a narrower end. .

"Chen is holding the DPP as a hostage. As a result, the Taiwan people, Washington, and Beijing all view Chen as capricious; by the same token, they will all view the DPP as unreliable. They will all distrust Chen, and they will all distrust the DPP. They all view Chen as backpedaling, so

will they view the DPP. Is it really wise and worthwhile for the DPP to put such a spell on the party's door just for Chen's sake? ."

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